

DRAFT Management Plan

*Bob Creek Wildland
Black Creek Heritage Rangeland*



Photo by Sam Wirzba

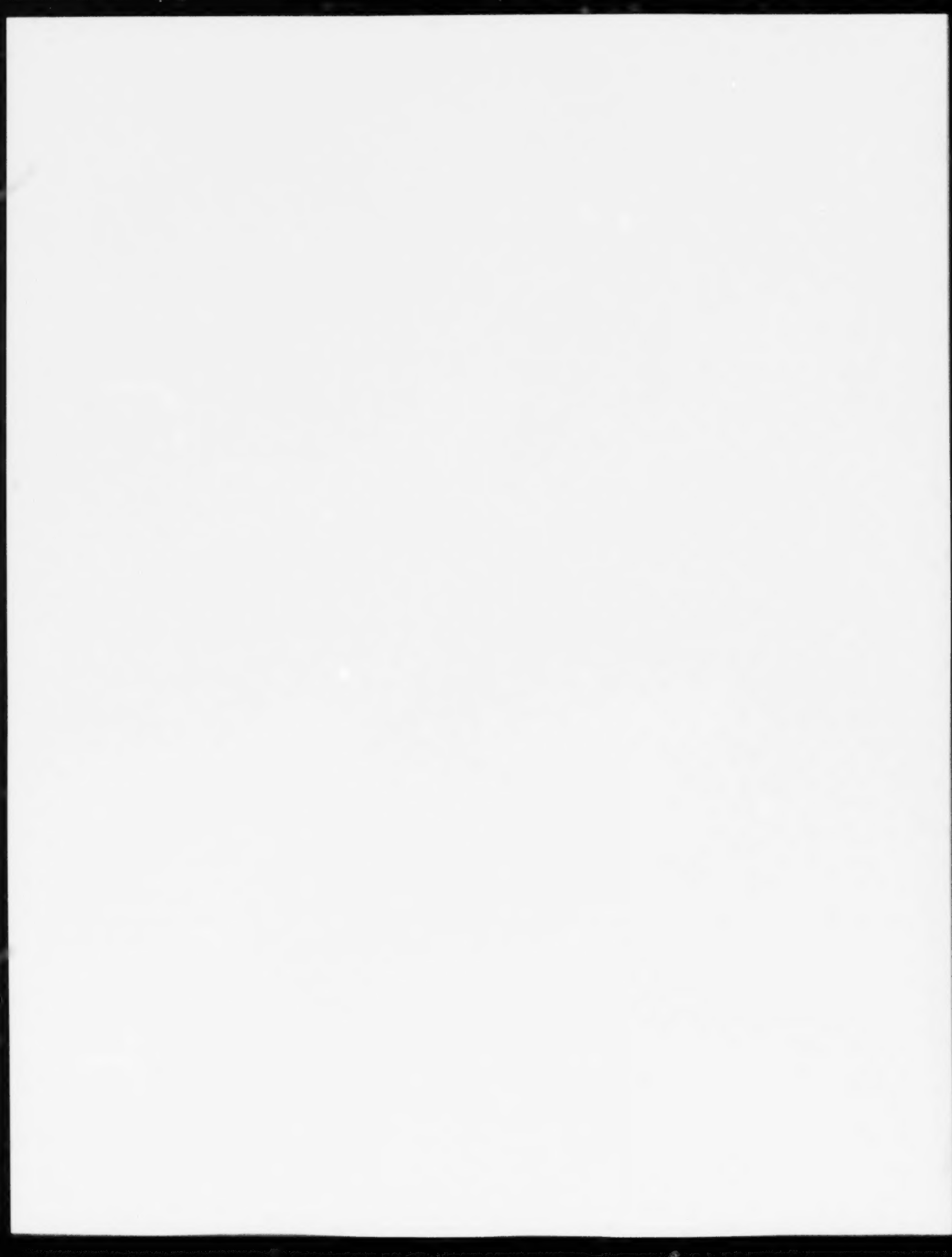
November 5, 2003

Prepared and endorsed for public consultation and review by the
Bob Creek Wildland/ Black Creek Heritage Rangeland Management Planning Team



Table of Contents

1.0 Introduction.....	1
1.1 Purpose.....	1
1.2 Designation.....	1
1.3 Boundaries.....	2
1.4 Description of Protected Areas	2
1.5 Alberta's Network of Protected Areas	5
1.6 Broad Management Intent.....	7
1.7 Management Principles.....	9
1.8 Dissolution of Upper Bob Creek Ecological Reserve	11
1.9 Adjacent Land Uses	11
1.10 Review and Approval of Activities not Identified in the Plan.....	12
2.0 Land and Resource Management.....	13
2.1 Rangeland Management	13
2.2 Forest Management.....	16
2.3 Fisheries Management	19
2.4 Wildlife Management	20
2.5 Minerals	22
2.6 Commercial Recreation, Guiding and Outfitting.....	23
2.7 Non-motorized Recreational Activities	24
2.8 Public Access and Motorized Recreational Activities.....	26
2.9 Motorized Access for Resource Management Purposes.....	33
2.10 Signs and Visitor Information.....	34
2.11 Public Education and Awareness.....	35
2.12 Research Activities	36
2.13 Historical Resources	37
3.0 Plan Administration and Implementation.....	38
3.1 Plan Implementation.....	38
3.2 Roles and Responsibilities of Provincial Agencies.....	38
3.3 Bob/Black Creek Advisory Committee	38
3.4 Plan Assessments and Amendments.....	39
Appendix 1 Table of Permitted Activities	40
Appendix 2 Memorandum of Understanding	41
Glossary.....	48
References	50
Maps	
1. Location of Protected Areas	4
2. Natural Sub-regions	8
3. Public Access and Access Facilities	29
4. Designated Motorized Trails in Bob Creek Wildland	30



1.0 Introduction

The Government of Alberta launched its Special Places program in March 1995. At the Government's request, the MD of Ranchland convened a local advisory committee to make recommendations for designating and managing a protected area in the Whaleback. In response to the Local Committee's report the Government of Alberta announced the creation of two protected areas in the Whaleback on 11 May 1999: Bob Creek Wildland and Black Creek Heritage Rangeland.

In November 1999 the Minister of Environment indicated that a single management plan would be prepared for the two protected areas. A planning team, consisting of local stakeholders, the MD of Ranchland, and provincial government staff, began meeting in February 2000 to develop the draft management plan. This management plan is based on recommendations developed by the Whaleback Special Places Local Committee.

1.1 Purpose

This plan provides direction for managing the resource values and human uses/activities that occur within the protected areas. The plan is intended to provide guidance to government agencies, the Bob/Black Creek Advisory Committee, and users of the area. Direction contained in this plan represents the provincial government's policy for managing the two protected areas.

1.2 Designation

The boundaries of the two protected areas were initially established through Orders in Council in May 1999. Interim names and interim designations were applied to the two protected areas:

Bob Creek Wildland Provincial Park
Black Creek Heritage Rangeland Natural Area

These interim designations were considered to be the best fit between Special Places Local Committee recommendations and provincial legislation which existed at that time. By way of history, coinciding with the period when the Bob Creek Wildland and Black Creek Heritage Rangeland were established, the Government of Alberta was embarking on the development of new consolidated protected areas legislation for the province. Public consultation materials that were distributed in September 1999 (i.e., Proposed Policy Foundation for the Natural Heritage Act) indicated that the proposed legislation would contain a new system of protected areas, consisting of 6 different classes. In particular, the new legislation would have entrenched the existence of a new 'Heritage Rangeland' class and a new 'Wildland' class. Anticipating the future adoption of the proposed Natural Heritage Act, the provincial government committed itself to re-designate and rename the two Whaleback protected areas once

new protected areas legislation was in place. At the time of writing, no new consolidated protected areas legislation has emerged.

In June 2003, Heritage Rangelands – a new class of protected areas – were officially established through amendments to the *Wilderness Areas, Ecological Reserves and Natural Areas Act* (i.e., Bill 24). As a result, Black Creek Natural Area was re-established to become Alberta's first heritage rangeland. Also in June 2003, Bob Creek Wildland Provincial Park was officially renamed as "Bob Creek Wildland." Other amendments that came into affect with the proclamation of Bill 24 are as follows:

- changing the boundary of the Rocky Mountains Forest Reserve along a portion of Whaleback Ridge;
- allowing for extended tenure to be offered to grazing disposition holders in both the Wildland and Heritage Rangeland; and
- prohibiting recreational off-highway vehicle use in Heritage Rangelands.

The provincial government's intention is to draft and adopt legislation in the future to allow recreational off-highway vehicles to cross the Black Creek Heritage Rangeland to access designated trails in the Bob Creek Wildland. The adoption of this new Bill – which will legalize recreational access through the Black Creek Heritage Rangeland – will also precipitate proclamation of section 8.1(3) of Bill 24.

1.3 Boundaries

The boundaries of the two protected areas were initially established through an Order in Council in May 1999. Subsequently, in June 2003, the changed boundaries of the two protected areas were established through new Orders in Council. The common boundary between the Wildland and Heritage Rangeland along Whaleback ridge was changed to reflect a change in the Rocky Mountains Forest Reserve boundary (enacted through the proclamation of Bill 24).

1.4 Description of the Protected Areas

Location and Size

Bob Creek Wildland and Black Creek Heritage Rangeland are located in south-western Alberta within the MD of Ranchland (Map 1). The two protected areas are situated between the Livingstone Ridge to the west, the Oldman River to the south, and Highway No. 22 to the east. Both sites are located entirely on public land and share a common boundary along Whaleback ridge. The Heritage Rangeland consists of a number of discontinuous land parcels. Together the two protected areas make up what is commonly called the "Whaleback" – one of Alberta's unique ecological treasures.

The two protected areas together cover 285 km². Bob Creek Wildland is 20,778 ha (51,341 ac) in size and Black Creek Heritage Rangeland is 7,760 ha (19,176 ac) in size. The Wildland exists

entirely within the Rocky Mountains Forest Reserve. [NOTE The Black Creek Heritage Rangeland will undergo a minor boundary change in the future to accommodate a land exchange that was agreed to when the site was first designated.]

Landscape

A description of the protected areas has been provided by Geowest (1997). The summary that follows in this section (i.e., landscape) and the next section (i.e., flora and fauna) is based largely on Geowest's biophysical inventory.

The Wildland and Heritage Rangeland are underlain by folded and faulted sedimentary bedrock. Linear foothill ridges are the dominant physiographic landscape feature in the protected areas. These ridges, which follow geological fault lines, display a strong north-south orientation as exemplified by Whaleback Ridge – a dominant landscape feature in the protected areas. Several different ice sheets once covered the area and have left their mark on the landscape. Surficial materials include morainal, colluvial, fluvial, glaciofluvial and glaciolacustrine parent materials, which overly bedrock. The soils that have developed in the protected areas are quite variable. Brunisols are characteristically associated with forested areas and Black Chernozems are found in grassland areas. Regosols can be found in riparian zones and Gleysols are present on poorly drained sites. Soils tend to be shallow in upland areas

Surface runoff from the protected areas drains primarily southward into the Oldman River. Runoff in the northern portion of the Wildland drains into Willow Creek; Willow Creek in turn eventually flows into the Oldman River in the prairies to the east. Cold water springs and seepage areas are found at a number of sites. There are no lakes within the protected areas. Livingstone Ridge (2170 meters above sea level) is a prominent landscape feature in the south-west corner. Also located in this area is the Livingstone Gap, a narrow, steep-sided pass through which the Oldman River flows as it exits the front ranges. Moving eastward one encounters foothill ridges having a marked linear axis on which sandstone rock outcrops are present; Whaleback Ridge, the dominant ridge, is approximately 29 kilometres in length. Wide valley floors tend to separate the ridge formations. The foothill ridges are characterized by strongly rolling topography; valleys are characterized by undulating terrain and floodplains.

Historically the area was used by aboriginal peoples, primarily to hunt buffalo. With the extirpation of the buffalo in about 1880, ranchers began using the highly productive fescue grasslands to build their cattle herds. Cattle ranching has been the dominant land-use in the area since the mid-1800s. Other land uses have included limited timber harvesting and some geo-physical exploration. A 500 KV transmission line parallels Whaleback ridge on its eastern side.

Flora and Fuana

The native vegetation that is found within the protected areas is well adapted to the unique climate regime and growing conditions found in the area. The climate typically consists of short, cool, moist summers and cold, dry winters. High evaporation rates are present due to wind and low humidity. Strong Chinook winds, which are most prevalent during the winter months, have the effect of keeping the area intermittently snow-free.

ALBERTA

Edmonton

Calgary

Clareholm

Lethbridge

Poncha Creek

PROTECTED AREAS LOCATION

BOB CREEK WILDLAND

UPPER BOB CREEK ECOLOGICAL RESERVE

BLACK CREEK HERITAGE RANGELAND

BOB CREEK WILDLAND BLACK CREEK HERITAGE RANGELAND MAP 1 Location of Protected Areas

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 km

West of the 100th Meridian

Bob Creek Wildland

Black Creek Heritage Rangeland

Alberta

Produced by: Alberta Sustainable Resource Development

Environment, August 2003

The protected area's grasslands occupy drier sites, particularly south and west-facing slopes and valley bottoms. Rough fescue, bluebunch wheatgrass, and oatgrass are among the dominant grass varieties found in the grassland community; species dominance is affected by factors such as elevation, moisture, grazing intensity, and brush and forest encroachment. A variety of flowering plants can be found in moister areas. Valley bottoms and riparian zones have been found to contain a rich abundance of forbs. Several varieties of rare, uncommon, or unusual plants are found in the protected areas. Coniferous forests are found at higher elevations, particularly on north and north-east facing slopes. Trees and extensive shrub communities are found in moist, sheltered locations including valley bottoms and hillsides. Dominant tree species include aspen, balsam poplar, lodgepole pine, Douglas fir (including some large, old specimens), and white spruce. Other species that are found include limber pine, whitebark pine, Engelmann spruce, and subalpine fir. Common under-story species include shrubby cinquefoil, creeping juniper, and mountain goldenrod. Dominant shrubs include several willow species and bog birch.

The diversity of vegetation communities found within the Wildland and Heritage Rangeland supports a rich variety of wildlife species. It is thought that the Whaleback may provide habitat for as many as 150 bird species, 57 mammal species (ungulates, carnivores, and small mammals), two reptile species, and four amphibian species. Several mammal species are considered to be special because they are uncommon in the Montane Natural Sub-Region or because they are at the edge of their normal range, including: pikas, hoary marmots, golden-mantled ground squirrels, and sagebrush voles. One of the most significant mammalian species found in the protected areas is the large ungulate – elk. The protected areas together comprise one of the two most significant elk wintering ranges within the province. The winter population of the Whaleback elk herd has averaged from 1000 - 1100 animals during the 1980s and 1990s (Jim Clark, Alberta Sustainable Resource Development).

Uncommon birds include the golden eagle, prairie falcon, lazuli bunting, mountain bluebird, Cassin's finch, Clark's nutcracker, American dipper, and bobolink. Due to the absence of lakes and wetlands in the protected areas, water-dependent species are uncommon. The relatively intact and pristine character of the Wildland and Heritage Rangeland have made these protected areas significant for maintaining a rich variety of wildlife species. The reader is encouraged to consult the reference *Biophysical Inventory, Significant, Sensitive and Disturbance Features of the Whaleback Area* (Geowest, 1997) for a fuller description of wildlife species that are found in the protected areas.

1.5 Alberta's Network of Protected Areas

Alberta's natural heritage and ecological diversity is preserved through a system of protected areas that occur throughout the province. The Bob Creek Wildland and Black Creek Heritage Rangeland are part of this provincial network.

Protected areas in Alberta are currently established under three provincial statutes:

- *Wilderness Areas, Ecological Reserves, Natural Areas and Heritage Rangelands Act*
- *Provincial Parks Act*
- *Willmore Wilderness Park Act*

These statutes and their accompanying regulations deal with various matters pertaining to the management, administration, and use of protected areas.

Protected Area Program Goals

Four broad goals serve as the cornerstones of Alberta's protected area program. These goals are as follows:

Preservation – to preserve and protect in perpetuity special and outstanding natural landscapes and features, as well as landscape-related prehistoric, historic and cultural resources.

Heritage Appreciation – to provide opportunities to explore, understand and appreciate Alberta's natural, historical and cultural heritage, and to enhance public awareness of our natural environment and our relationship to and dependence on it.

Outdoor Recreation – to provide a variety of intensive and dispersed outdoor recreation opportunities and related facilities and services.

Heritage Tourism – to encourage residents and visitors to discover and enjoy the natural, historical and cultural resources of the province through a variety of recreational opportunities, facilities and accommodation services.

Natural Regions Framework

A scientific framework has been developed to identify and classify different bio-geo-climatic regions/landscapes within the province. The framework consists of a landscape classification hierarchy that identifies landscape types based on natural characteristics including: landform, hydrology, climate, geology, soils, and vegetation.

Alberta is divided into six Natural Regions: Boreal Forest; Rocky Mountains; Foothills; Canadian Shield; Parkland; and Grassland. Each Natural Region is subdivided into several Subregions. Subregions in turn are subdivided into Level 1 Natural History Themes, which are subdivided into Level 2 Themes, which are further subdivided into Level 3 Themes. Larger classification units are more heterogeneous while smaller land classification units tend to be more homogeneous.

The Bob Creek Wildland and Black Creek Heritage Rangeland occur entirely within the Rocky Mountains Natural Region except for a small portion of the Heritage Rangeland, which occurs within the Grasslands Natural Region (Map 2). In 1999 (when first designated), approximately

68 percent of the two protected areas fell within the Montane Subregion, 30 percent of the two protected areas fell within the Subalpine Subregion, and 2 percent of the two protected areas fell within the Foothills Fescue Subregion.

1.6 Broad Management Intent

The Wildland and the Heritage Rangeland will be managed to maintain and preserve their unique heritage, culture, and biodiversity for future generations.

Management of the two protected areas will allow for various land uses that are consistent with maintaining the ecological integrity of the area. A conservative and holistic approach to management will be maintained to achieve a working balance between nature and human activity.

All users of the protected area will assume responsibility for maintaining the ecological diversity and integrity of the two protected areas.

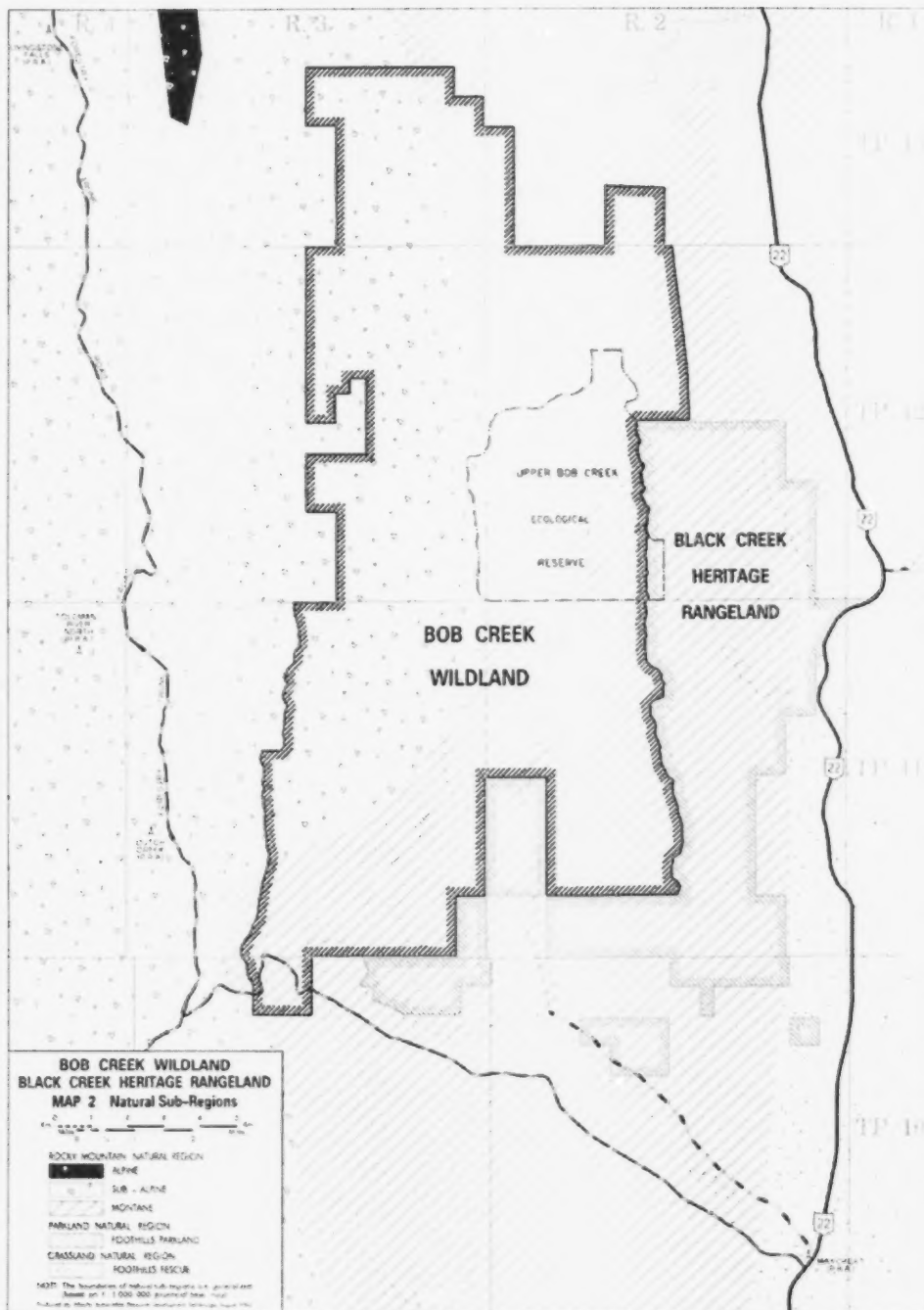
The primary goal of the Wildland and the Heritage Rangeland is as follows: To preserve the natural heritage (i.e., soil, flora, fauna, landscape features, and natural/ecological processes) of the two protected areas in perpetuity. Other provincial protected areas program goals (i.e., heritage appreciation, outdoor recreation, heritage tourism) are of secondary importance with respect to the protected areas. The heritage appreciation and outdoor recreation goals may be met, but only to the extent that their attainment does not conflict with or impinge on the preservation goal. The heritage tourism goal will not be pursued in the protected areas.

Natural biophysical features and ecological processes will be managed to ensure the ongoing ecological integrity of the Montane, Sub-Alpine, and Foothills Fescue ecosystems. The Wildland and Heritage Rangeland will together constitute one management entity within the larger landscape.

Only those land uses and activities that do not undermine the ecological integrity of the area will be permitted. Non-conforming land uses that are excluded from both protected areas, include:

- commercial logging
- tourism and recreational development
- services and facilities
- exploration and development of surface materials (e.g., sand, gravel)
- exploration and development of Crown-owned oil, gas, coal, metallic and industrial minerals
- new road development
- construction of pipelines, electric transmission lines, telecommunication towers
- cultivation of land for agricultural purposes.

Map 2



The protected areas provide an outstanding example of the Montane Natural Subregion within Alberta. Minimal industrial disturbance has occurred within the protected areas. As a result, both sites are relatively pristine in character. Grazing disposition holders (lessees and permittees) have demonstrated responsible stewardship and good management of the landscape, thereby ensuring the area's ongoing ecological integrity. Government resource management actions and traditional activities (primarily ranching) have influenced the landscape pattern that currently exists within the protected areas.

1.7 Management Principles

The following management principles will guide decision making in the Wildland and the Heritage Rangeland.

Adaptive Management

"A dynamic planning or modelling process that recognizes the future cannot be predicted perfectly. In response to these imperfect predictions, planning and management strategies are modified frequently as better information becomes available. It applies scientific principles and methods to improve management activities incrementally, as decision-makers learn from experience and new scientific findings, and adapt to changing social expectations and demands" (Dictionary of Natural Resources Management, 1996). Adaptive management is "a tenet of ecological management in which human resource users are flexible to change the way they interact with ecosystems, based upon the need for and availability of new information" (Alberta Forest Conservation Strategy, May 1997).

Shared Stewardship

'Shared' stewardship implies a collaborative approach among user groups in managing and caring for the land and its resources so that they can be passed on to future generations unimpaired. 'Shared' stewardship requires that government agencies – having a legislated mandate for land and resource management – work co-operatively with disposition holders, resource users, interest groups and individuals to achieve common stewardship goals.

Responsible Stewardship

The willing commitment of user groups to conduct themselves, and to carry out their activities, in a manner which prevents unacceptable environmental impairments and which maintains fully functioning ecosystems at all levels (from the local site to the larger landscape). Users of the protected areas are encouraged to share with government agencies any information that will assist provincial staff in managing the natural environment, human activities, and the resource values which are found in the Wildland and Heritage Rangeland. Information that is provided will be incorporated within databases at the discretion of provincial agency staff.

Ecosystem Management

"A management practice and philosophy aimed at maintaining and/or enhancing the ecological integrity of an ecosystem in order to ensure continued ecosystem health while providing resources, products or non-consumptive values for humans" (Dictionary of Natural Resources Management, 1996). Ecological management "is a bio-centred approach to resource use in which human needs are met if the ecosystem's ability to manage itself is not compromised, focusing on the management of human activities more strongly than other ecosystem components. . . . The key idea behind ecological management is that we can substitute planned, human activities for random and naturally occurring biological processes within the range of natural variability of those processes." (Alberta Forest Conservation Strategy, May 1997). Ecosystem management necessitates that resource managers and users develop a better understanding of the processes by which natural systems sustain themselves and that management actions emulate natural processes so as to maintain healthy, dynamic and diverse ecosystems.

Ecosystem Sustainability

Ecosystems will be managed to yield a flow of resources, values and human benefits:

- without compromising natural landscapes and their processes;
- while safeguarding the ongoing productive and renewal capacities, as well as the genetic, species and ecological diversity, of ecosystems; and
- by avoiding, remedying or mitigating the adverse effects of activities on the environment.

Precautionary Principle

Caution will be exercised whenever uncertainty exists about the consequences of intended management actions or when the effects of land uses and resource-based activities are not known.

Integrated Resource Management (IRM)

IRM is a strategic and interactive approach to the management of natural resources that attempts to take into account the largest number of social needs and values within the decision-making process. The aim of IRM is to ensure that the optimal use of natural resources is achieved while maintaining the integrity of the environment. A decision regarding the use of any given resource will invariably preclude other options for the use of that resource. As well, decisions concerning the use of a particular resource often have consequences for the use or management of other resource values in the geographic area of interest. As a result, IRM stresses the need for achieving high levels of co-ordination when making resource management decisions. Co-ordination entails the involvement of affected stakeholders to ensure that issues associated with the allocation, use and management of natural resources are co-operatively resolved.

Referrals

Referrals (whether formal or informal) are the means by which a co-ordinating agency, approval agency or decision-making body solicits input from key stakeholders (government and non-government) to make an informed decision. Internal government referrals ensure appropriate agencies are informed, facilitate the exchange of information, and allow for the development of an integrated government position/decision on a given matter. Referrals are based on the principle of 'consultation before action'.

Observe Legislated Mandates

The statutory authority that has been conferred to provincial government departments and agencies for land and resource management will be observed. This authority will not be delegated or assigned to other entities, groups or individuals.

Monitoring

"The process of checking, observing, and measuring outcomes for key variables or specific ecological phenomena against a predefined quantitative objective or standard. It takes place after an event or process has been initiated or completed to evaluate if the anticipated or assumed results of a management plan have been or are being realized and/or if implementation is proceeding as planned. . . . monitoring is the systematic measurement or analysis of change . . ." (Dictionary of Natural Resources Management, 1996).

Measurability

The adoption of measurable management objectives and guidelines whose attainment can be successfully determined.

1.8 Dissolution of Upper Bob Creek Ecological Reserve

The Upper Bob Creek Ecological Reserve was established by Order in Council on February 16, 1989 under the Wilderness Areas, Ecological Reserves and Natural Areas Act. A management plan was approved for the Ecological Reserve in June 1995.

As the Ecological Reserve lands have been incorporated as part of the two protected areas, the ecological reserve designation will be rescinded following approval of this management plan. De-listing will follow procedures that are outlined in existing legislation/regulations and government policies.

1.9 Adjacent Land Uses

The two protected areas are part of a larger ecosystem, and as such will be managed to achieve landscape-level goals and objectives (as set out in fisheries, wildlife, forest pest, weed, fire management, . . . strategies). The Livingstone-Porcupine Hills Sub-Regional Integrated Resource Plan (IRP) and the future C5 Forest Management Plan will influence land use and human activities on adjacent lands. Other plans and policies (e.g., grazing management plans; timber harvesting plans; wildlife management strategies; MD of Ranchland Municipal Development Plan; access management plans, ERCB Information Letter [IL] 93-9, etc.) will also affect the use of land and resources in the vicinity of the two protected areas. Policy direction and management regimes contained in different management plans and strategies need to be consistent.

To ensure that the protected areas unique biophysical features are not unduly impacted, provincial agencies and affected stakeholders will be encouraged to consult with each other to explore ways in which the potential impacts of adjacent land uses/activities can be mitigated – to help preserve the unique character and qualities of the Wildland and the Heritage Rangeland – subject to existing government policies and regulatory provisions. Disposition holders and operators will be encouraged to adopt ‘best practices’ to minimize the footprint of their activities.

1.10 Review & Approval of Activities not Identified in the Plan

The broad management intent, principles, and resource management objectives and strategies contained in this plan, as well as pertinent provisions contained in existing legislation and government policy documents, will provide guidance to staff who are involved in completing referrals. The referral process will be used to identify:

- potential impacts associated with a proposal
- reasons for rejecting a proposal/applications
- any mitigative actions that must be taken to address environmental concerns if the use, activity or development proceeds

New dispositions will be processed in accordance with existing government administrative processes.

2.0 Land and Resource Management

2.1 Rangeland Management

Synopsis

Rangelands that are found within the Bob Creek Wildland and the Black Creek Heritage Rangeland have developed under a history of grazing and fire. This part of the province, which is subject to frequent Chinook winds, has historically provided important winter range for bison and other indigenous grazers. Grazing pressure, in conjunction with frequent, low intensity fires, has contributed to the establishment of a relatively open vegetative community structure. Generally, grasslands dominate drier sites while closed forest stands and shrub lands occupy high moisture sites. Since the 1900's, fire has been effectively removed from the ecosystem. As a result, significant forest encroachment has occurred onto open grasslands.

Domestic livestock grazing was first introduced into the area in the mid 1880's when the federal government issued leases (ranging up to 100,000 acres in size) for livestock grazing in the 'North-West Territories'. The Walrond Rancho Company acquired grazing leases for approximately 216,640 acres of federal land. It appears that the Walrond's land holdings included a significant portion of land which today is part of the two protected areas. Since the introduction of domestic livestock to the area, livestock (primarily cattle), and to a lesser extent, native elk herds, have dominated grazing on the protected area's rangelands.

Livestock grazing within the Black Creek Heritage Rangeland is administered under the *Public Lands Act*. There are three grazing leases in the Heritage Rangeland, providing approximately 8,338 animal unit months of grazing annually. Livestock grazing within the Bob Creek Wildland is administered under the *Forest Reserves Act*. There are eleven grazing allotments that are either completely or partially contained within the Wildland, providing approximately 9,200 animal unit months of grazing annually.

Management Objectives

1. To maintain domestic livestock grazing as a legitimate and traditional land use activity in the Bob Creek Wildland and Black Creek Heritage Rangeland. Domestic livestock grazing is an important tool for maintaining rangeland health and rangeland resources for use by both livestock and wildlife. (*Management Strategies #1 and 2 apply*)
2. To develop and/or maintain range management plans for each grazing disposition. Range management plans identify sound range management practices that conserve soil, vegetation, and water for long-term sustained forage productivity and ecological health. The principles of range management include:
 - balance grazing demand with the available forage supply;
 - avoid grazing of rangelands when they are vulnerable to damage;
 - distribute livestock grazing pressure over the landscape; and
 - provide effective rest after grazing to improve or maintain native plant communities.

- (Management Strategies #2, 3b, and 3c apply)*
3. To maintain or enhance the ecological health of the native plant communities in the protected areas in a state that is closely representative of climax or original vegetation. Generally, grazing is managed to attain or maintain plant communities in a healthy condition. *(Management Strategies #2 and 3b apply)*
 4. To document the location and status (population size, threats, or management concerns) of any rare plants as defined by the most recent version of the provincial rare plant tracking list – Alberta Natural Heritage Information Centre Plant Species of Special Concern. *(Management Strategy #5 applies)*
 5. To manage plant communities that have become modified to non-native species – due to historic conditions and natural invasion – for their conservation values (plant vigour and soil and watershed protection), and to minimize further invasion into native plant communities. *(Management Strategies #2, 4, and 6 apply)*
 6. To maintain a landscape that reflects a diversity of grassland, forest, and shrub cover communities associated with the Montane Subregion. The natural tendency of ecological succession is toward forest cover, altering the desired balance in diversity. Changes in this desired structural diversity due to succession will be addressed through appropriate management treatments. *(Management Strategies #7a and 7b apply)*
 7. To manage riparian areas for forage production and the maintenance of fish and wildlife habitat. The objective is to maintain or attain a healthy functioning riparian system by conserving water, soil and vegetation. *(Management Strategies #2 and 3a apply)*
 8. To ensure sustainable stocking rates based on the capability and ecological health of the range. *(Management Strategy #8 applies)*
 9. To allow for range maintenance projects which improve the overall management of the rangeland for the benefit of livestock and wildlife. *(Management Strategy #9 applies)*
 10. To adopt measures which prevent the establishment and spread of noxious and restricted weeds, and to control infestations as outlined in the Weed Control Act and the Municipal District of Ranchland weed control bylaws. *(Management Strategy #10 applies)*
 11. To ensure that re-vegetation and reclamation projects return a disturbed area to its original (historic) capability and natural vegetation. *(Management Strategy #11 applies)*

Management Strategies

1. Forest reserve grazing permits and public lands grazing leases will be maintained as the method to allow and administer sustainable livestock grazing practices.
2. New, or where available (recent), range inventories will be used to establish a baseline of range health to be used for future range management. The expectation is to maintain or eventually attain a state where 85% of the plant communities are in a healthy condition, with no more than 5% in an unhealthy condition.
3.
 - a) Inventories of riparian areas will be completed to establish a baseline for future range management. For watercourses where riparian areas are in a degraded state, these areas will be managed to bring about improvements such that: at least 20% of the riparian area is healthy and functioning; 70% is functioning at risk, and; not more than 20% is in a non-functioning condition.
 - b) Land management agencies will monitor the rangeland resource at three levels:
 - i establish and/or maintain permanent benchmarks to:

- develop standard range and riparian health protocols to assess range and riparian health
- establish photo points where broad scale vegetative changes, such as forest encroachment, can be monitored
- ii carry out audits of individual grazing dispositions:
 - an audit system will be established whereby individual grazing dispositions will receive a formal inspection at a minimum of at least once during every five-year period
 - the audit will assess range health and overall grazing management (i.e., utilization, distribution, grazing systems, and period of use)
- iii establish a practical method to assess structural and life form diversity changes on the landscape
- c) New range management plans will be developed for individual dispositions. Range management plans will be based on new or recent range resource information (i.e., inventories). Range and riparian surveys will be the basis for establishing range management plans for individual dispositions. Plans will be developed by land management agencies with the involvement of disposition holders. Livestock management within the area will be guided by the principles and direction outlined in this plan. Individual management plans will be 'adaptive' documents that can be modified and updated for the purpose of improving management. Formal reviews and updates will be undertaken as required.
- 4. The cultivation of native prairie will not be allowed. Land disturbances for the purpose of re-establishing native species on sites that presently contain non-native species will be considered after a favourable peer review of techniques.
- 5. Rare plant sites will be recorded during range and riparian inventories. The Alberta Natural Heritage Information Centre will be contacted prior to undertaking the inventories in order to obtain any existing information on rare plants for the area. The Centre will provide a procedure to assess and record sites. This information will be forwarded to the Centre.
- 6. Haying operations (i.e., the mechanical harvesting of forages) will not be allowed in the protected areas except to control non-native species (e.g., timothy).
- 7. a) The structural and life form diversity found within the protected areas is highly desirable, both from an ecological standpoint and for achieving societal values. Visual preference studies indicate that mosaic landscapes are highly preferred by society (Olson and Olson, 2000). However, natural succession within the protected areas, without disturbance, is towards forest cover. To maintain a landscape mosaic, forest and brush encroachment must be managed so that it does not increase by more than 5% or decrease by more than 20%. Management strategies should maintain similar plant community compositions and ratios to ensure that the values provided by each plant community type are maintained. The focus of management actions will be on controlling the encroachment of aspen, Douglas Fir, pine, and shrub species onto native grasslands.
- b) Control of forest and brush encroachment may be necessary to manage succession through the removal of mature or immature stands which are encroaching onto grasslands. Removal will be through prescribed burning, conventional methods (i.e., brushing, mowing, and dragging), livestock management (i.e., stocking rates, and grazing times), and other suitable methods that may be developed. A plan will be required to ensure that

vegetation removal objectives comply with the overall management guidelines for the area.

8. Stocking rates will be based on long term monitoring, rangeland inventories, and range management plans. Stocking rates will be set to attain or maintain a healthy condition for the majority of rangelands.
9. Rangeland and habitat maintenance projects that are undertaken to improve the management of livestock and wildlife will require development plans that outline the purpose of these projects. Development plans will be reviewed and approved by the land management agency responsible for the area to ensure that plans comply with the overall management guidelines for the area. Rangeland and habitat maintenance projects that will be considered include: fencing, off-stream water development, brush management, trail development, or any other activity that will improve livestock distribution or addresses a management concern.
10. The Municipal District of Ranchland is responsible for the enforcement of the Weed Control Act. Weed control will be addressed in accordance with existing provincial policies and programs. Under the Public Lands Act, weed control in the White Area is the responsibility of the leaseholder. Restricted weeds will be eliminated. Noxious and selected nuisance weeds will be controlled using methods that are effective and least detrimental to other vegetation, animals, and soil. Restricted and noxious weeds will be monitored through an inventory of infestations and an assessment of the effectiveness and impacts of treatments. The use of herbicides to control or eliminate undesirable vegetation will be examined on a case by case basis. When determining the suitability of herbicides, consideration will be given to the effectiveness of the product and its ecological 'footprint' on non-target species and on ecological processes.
11. Re-vegetation and reclamation projects will focus on careful topsoil management and the use of adaptive management actions to allow for natural recovery. Where seeding is necessary, native seed collected from local seed sources will be used for re-vegetation. On erosion prone sites, the seeding of annuals that have been approved by the appropriate government agency may also be considered.

2.2 Forest Management

Synopsis

The Bob Creek Wildland and Black Creek Heritage Rangeland are part of a complex landscape mosaic that includes a number of different forest plant communities. The Montane and Sub-alpine Natural Subregions are the two dominant bio-geo-climatic regions that occur within the two protected areas. Tree species that are common in the Wildland and Heritage Rangeland include: trembling aspen (*Populus tremuloides*), balsam poplar (*Populus balsamifera*), lodgepole pine (*Pinus contorta*), Douglas fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*), white spruce (*Picea glauca*), and limber pine (*Pinus flexilis*). Assessments have confirmed that limber pine and Douglas fir trees found within the protected areas are among the oldest trees found in Alberta.

Douglas fir stands tend to occupy well-drained soils; individual trees are well spaced and able to withstand repeated, low-intensity fires. Ridge tops and rock outcrops provide habitat for limber pine. Mature white spruce stands typically occur in riparian areas that have not been

significantly affected by wildfire. A significant portion of the protected areas has been colonized by an even-aged stand of lodgepole pine since the last major fire in 1936. The encroachment of both coniferous and deciduous tree species onto open grasslands has occurred since settlers occupied the area. The removal of bison and the effective control of wildfires have significantly contributed to the expansion of forest stands onto former grasslands. Human control of wildfires during the last number of decades has resulted in the establishment of fairly dense, multi-layered forest stands in the protected areas.

Historically, the protected areas' timber resources were considered when establishing the annual allowable cut for the C-5 forest management unit. However, compared to other sites in the C-5 unit, logging activities within the protected areas have been quite limited and modest. Timber that was harvested was often used locally. Logging of mature coniferous trees, by a commercial operator, utilizing a diameter selection prescription occurred on Black Mountain and along Whaleback Ridge (to the north of Black Mountain) before the establishment of the two protected areas.

With the designation of the Wildland and Heritage Rangeland in 1999, the protected areas forested land base was removed from the C-5 forest management unit. During the formal announcement of the Wildland and Heritage Rangeland as 'Special Places' sites, the provincial government indicated that commercial timber harvesting would no longer be permitted in the two protected areas.

Forest Management

Management Objectives

1. To maintain a mix of forest, shrub and grassland communities consistent with the structure and diversity that is found within the protected areas.

Management Strategies

1.
 - a) Prescribed burning and prescribed tree stand removal operations will be the preferred methods for balancing forest cover types with other plant communities. Consideration should be given to the following when undertaking stand removal operations to achieve a desired landscape vegetation pattern:
 - mimic naturally occurring forest processes where possible
 - encourage natural plant re-vegetation, site recovery, and plant succession
 - if necessary, local native seed sources will be used for site re-establishment
 - undertake reclamation work where human activity results in significant site disturbance or environmental degradation
 - address the needs and concerns of resource values and various land uses (e.g., wildlife habitat, livestock rangelands, wildlife travel corridors, rare plants) when developing stand removal operational plans

- b) Operational plans will be developed before commencing with prescribed burns and/or prescribed stand removals. Operational plans that are prepared by non-government entities must be approved by provincial agencies before vegetation removal or site modifications can occur. Operational plans will, among other things, identify the objectives of a forest management treatment and outline the methods that will be employed in field operations.
- c) Minimizing human disturbance associated with any forest management projects will be a priority in the planning process and during field operations. Preference will be given to environmentally sensitive forest stand removal methods.

Fire Management

Management Objectives

- 1. To recognize the multi-faceted nature of fire by:
 - aggressively suppressing wildfires; and
 - using prescribed fire as a management tool.

Management Strategies

- 1.
 - a) All wildfires will be assessed, and where deemed to be a threat, will be dealt with through quick and aggressive initial attack measures. Should such actions fail, increased fire control resources will be assigned to ensure total suppression. The impacts associated with fire suppression activities will be minimized. Impacts caused by equipment will be assessed after suppression efforts are concluded and necessary remedial actions will be undertaken.
 - b) Prescribed fire may be used as a vegetation management tool, under pre-planned and controlled conditions, for one or more of the following reasons: habitat development, range management (i.e., to control aspen encroachment), fuel modification, or silvicultural treatments. A research program may be undertaken in conjunction with a prescribed burn to further scientific knowledge on the effects of fire on the ecosystem.
 - c) Prescribed burning will also be considered as a forest management tool to eradicate or control insects and diseases.

Insect and Disease Management

Management Objectives

- 1. To maintain a healthy forest ecosystem.
- 2. To monitor the forest for insect and disease outbreaks.

Management Strategies

1.
 - a) Efforts will be made to eradicate insects and disease:
 - to maintain the ecological values of the area
 - when pests threaten forest resources
 - when insect and disease outbreaks reach epidemic proportions
 - b) The feasibility and effectiveness of manual, biological, mechanical, and chemical techniques will be evaluated when determining how to best control insects and diseases. Sanitation cutting and controlled burns will be the preferred methods for controlling insects and disease.
2. Monitoring of forest insects and diseases will occur to:
 - detect early signs of insect and disease outbreaks
 - determine if an outbreak is expanding or contracting
 - determine whether an outbreak is endemic in nature
 - determine what appropriate remedial actions should be taken to control a particular outbreak

2.3 Fisheries Management

Synopsis

The Oldman River is the major drainage within the region. Its upper reaches are divided from the middle and lower reaches by the Oldman River Dam and Reservoir. Within the planning area, the river contains cutthroat trout, rainbow trout, bull trout, and mountain whitefish. The river is a major destination stream for trout fishermen.

White Creek is a tributary of the Livingstone River. It is a productive stream for cutthroat trout and also contains occasional bull trout. Camp Creek contains cutthroat trout/rainbow trout hybrids. Bob Creek contains cutthroat trout.

These streams are currently managed under the Eastern Slopes trout stream regulations that came into effect in 1998. Under the 1998 fisheries strategy, streams are open to fishing from June 16th to October 31st. The Oldman River fishery is managed under a "catch and release" regulation. Other streams are managed with catch limits and minimum size limits, and are "catch and release" after August 31st.

Management Objectives

1. To maintain or enhance fish populations and fish habitat within the protected areas.
2. To manage the sport fishery within a larger regional context.

Management Strategies

1. a) Further inventory work will be completed to determine which fish species are present in

major tributaries in the protected areas (i.e., Bob Creek, Camp Creek, and White Creek) and to obtain basic data on fisheries habitat. This inventory work will be undertaken as part of the 'Co-operative Fisheries Inventory Program'.

- b) Riparian health assessments will be completed for the following tributaries: Chaffen Creek, White Creek, and Hunter Creek (assessments have already been completed for Bob Creek, Camp Creek, and Black Creek).
 - c) Stream habitat improvement projects may be undertaken as necessary.
 - d) Stream crossings associated with the OHV designated trail system (as outlined in the *Public Access and Motorized Recreational Activities* section of this plan) will be inspected to determine:
 - the impact of open water fords by OHVs
 - whether bank and channel hardening, creek crossing structures, or other mitigative measures are required
 - if designated trail segments should be closed or trails relocated
2. Sport fishing regulations that apply to the protected areas will be established when regulations are developed for Fisheries Management Area ESI.

2.4 Wildlife Management

Synopsis

"Wildlife" is being used in this section to refer to any native species of mammal, bird, reptile, or amphibian that is found within the protected areas.

The protected areas have historically provided important elk winter range. Elk and other ungulates (e.g., Mule Deer) will migrate to the area during the late fall and winter months to feed on wind blown ridges and south-facing grass covered slopes. Whenever large concentrations of ungulates congregate in an area such as the Wildland and Heritage Rangeland, large predators that are dependant on these prey species are sure to follow. Wolves, coyotes, and cougars regularly range through the protected areas. During the summer months, black and grizzly bears will also travel through, and forage within, the protected areas.

Livestock grazing has been a traditional use in the protected areas since the mid 1800's. Livestock depredation by large carnivores has occurred within the Wildland and Heritage Rangeland. Fish and Wildlife Division staff have been working with local ranchers to minimize livestock mortality and to remove offending predators when necessary.

The protected areas fall within Wildlife Management Unit (WMU) 308. Fish and Wildlife Division staff regularly inventory wildlife populations in the WMU. Harvest levels for hunted game species are set based on these wildlife inventories. At present, hunters are able to harvest bull elk, white-tailed deer, black bears, and cougars through a general hunting license. Cow elk, moose, mule deer, and grizzly bears are harvested through a quota system. Wildlife in the protected areas are managed in accordance with provincial wildlife policies and species management plans. Much of the land base within the Wildland and Heritage Rangeland fall

within the 'critical wildlife' zone, which is outlined in the Livingstone/Porcupine Hills Integrated Resource Plan.

A registered trap line coincides with the protected areas. The licenced trapper harvests a number of different fur bearers that are common to the area. Trapping seasons and quota limits for fur bearers are set by Fish and Wildlife Division. Fur management areas are being managed in accordance with provincial policies and trapping regulations.

The greatest threat to wildlife in the protected areas is the loss of wildlife habitat. Effective fire suppression efforts during the last several decades have resulted in the unrelenting encroachment of shrub and tree communities on former grasslands. Furthermore, vegetative biomass levels have been building over the years and some forest stands have become decadent. Fire, or vegetation management approaches that mimic the effects of fire, are seen as necessary to introduce early plant succession stages back onto the landscape.

Management Objectives

1. To manage wildlife populations using an ecosystem, 'coarse-filter' approach.
2. To manage wildlife populations in a manner that is consistent with direction contained in applicable Wildlife Management Unit (WMU) strategies and provincial/regional wildlife management plans.
3. To conserve the biological diversity that exists in the protected areas.
4. To retain viable populations of native wildlife species.
5. To maintain and enhance wildlife habitat and habitat connectivity.
6. To complete inventories and studies for the purpose of effectively managing wildlife species and their habitats.
7. To manage large predators and problem wildlife using a consultative process.

Management Strategies

1. a) The protected areas will not be treated as an 'island', having a wildlife management regime which is distinctly different from adjacent areas.
b) Wildlife species that are at risk may be managed using a 'fine-filter' approach.
2. Wildlife management goals, strategies, and regulations will continue to be established for individual WMUs. Wildlife management direction for applicable WMUs (i.e., 308, 306, 402) will be applied to the protected areas.
3. Historical and current levels of species biodiversity will be determined and evaluated on an ongoing basis through an assessment of species occurrence and relative abundance, and wildlife habitat associations.
4. a) Big game surveys will be used to establish allocation levels for hunted species.
b) Fur bearer populations may be monitored to determine population levels when necessary.
c) Domestic livestock, infected with diseases which are detrimental to wildlife, will be excluded from the protected areas.
d) No exotic species will be introduced into the protected areas. Use of exotic/domestic species such as llamas and goats for commercial or recreational purposes may be allowed subject to existing health requirements for commercial users.

5. a) Habitat mapping and habitat evaluations will be undertaken as necessary to quantify habitat conditions for 'keystone' wildlife species and other species of interest or concern.
b) Habitat and rangeland management decisions will take into account the needs of both wildlife and domestic livestock.
c) Habitat management will emphasize the retention of all ecosystem components and the retention (or emulation) of natural processes. Habitat improvement and enhancement projects will be evaluated and prioritized on a multi-species basis; the benefits of habitat projects for domestic livestock will also be considered.
6. a) Information gaps will be addressed through ongoing species/habitat inventories, studies, research projects, aerial surveys, etc. Current inventory activities will be expanded to include carnivores, fur bearers, and non-game species.
b) Research on wildlife-habitat associations will be undertaken to: establish Montane/Sub-alpine biodiversity levels, identify 'keystone' species, and identify key habitat features in need of protection and/or management.
c) A monitoring program will be established to assess ecosystem health and change over time. Monitoring protocols and target species to be monitored will be determined by Fish and Wildlife Division in consultation with other stakeholders.
7. a) Fish and Wildlife Division will establish a local Carnivore Advisory Committee for the Oldman River basin. The purpose of this multi-stakeholder committee is to provide input for the management of large carnivores, particularly in relation to livestock predation and human safety issues.
b) Ungulates and carnivores will be managed to reduce wildlife conflict occurrences. Should wildlife conflicts emerge, appropriate remedial actions will be implemented that have minimal impacts on non-target species, people, and property.
c) Registered trappers may be approached to assist with predator management activities in the protected areas.

2.5 Minerals

Synopsis

The two protected areas are relatively untouched by mineral activity. Some seismic activity has taken place over the years to test the potential of the area for mineral resources. At present no mineral development (i.e., no oil and gas wells) exist within the Wildland and Heritage Rangeland.

Two significant historical events have in effect curbed mineral development within the two protected areas. In April 1994, the Energy and Utilities Board (formerly the Energy Resources Conservation Board) denied an application of Amoco Canada Petroleum to drill an exploratory well in the Bob Creek area of the Whaleback (ERCB Decision 94-8). In the Board's judgement, Amoco's application failed to serve "the overall public interest," primarily because of the impact natural gas development could have on the "ecological, recreational and aesthetic value" of the Whaleback area. In May 1999 BP Amoco (formerly Amoco Canada Petroleum) agreed not to develop their Crown petroleum and natural gas rights in the Whaleback area. At a ceremony shortly thereafter, Premier Ralph Klein announced the designation of the two protected areas.

At the same ceremony, BP Amoco donated their two Crown petroleum and natural gas licences, which include portions of the two protected areas, to the Nature Conservancy of Canada. The two existing Crown petroleum and natural gas licences held by the Nature Conservancy of Canada have an expiry date of April 2004.

There are approximately 3 ½ sections of freehold minerals in the two protected areas (2 ½ sections are in the south-western portion of the Wildland and just over 1 section is in the south-western portion of the Heritage Rangeland).

Management Objectives

1. To respect freehold mineral interests in the Wildland and Heritage Rangeland.
2. To acknowledge that the development of Crown minerals is an incompatible land use in the Wildland and Heritage Rangeland protected areas.

Management Strategies

Freehold Minerals

A freehold mineral title is a legal interest in land, which is treated the same as a legal interest in private (patented) land. If freehold minerals within a protected area are targeted for development, access may be provided subject to 'normal' regulatory processes to allow for the development of minerals in a manner that does not compromise the ecological integrity of adjacent lands.

Crown Minerals

1. The exploration and development of oil, gas, coal, or metallic and industrial minerals will not be permitted in the protected areas.
2. Alberta Department of Energy will not issue any new mineral rights within the protected areas.

2.6 Commercial Recreation, Guiding and Outfitting

Synopsis

Alberta Community Development (Parks and Protected Areas) is responsible for the administration of commercial recreation activities in designated protected areas. At present, a permit is required by anyone who leads or guides other people on recreational trips within a provincial park. Guided activities that currently take place in the protected areas include: horseback trips, guided hunts, and guided hiking. These activities occur primarily during the summer and fall seasons.

Because of the unique natural features found in the protected areas, and the establishment of new motorized access restrictions through this plan, it is anticipated that potential exists for increased non-motorized commercial recreation activity in the protected areas. New forms of guided activities and commercial recreational ventures may also be attracted to the area in the future. To adequately safeguard the protected areas from any undesirable impacts associated with these activities, commercial recreational activities will be monitored and appropriate management actions will be implemented to address emerging issues.

Management Objectives

1. To allow low-impact commercial recreational activities within the protected areas.
2. To monitor and assess commercial recreation activities.

Management Strategies

1. a) Commercial recreational activities must safeguard the protected areas natural heritage and be compatible with the area's existing ranching culture. Examples of compatible commercial recreational activities include: horse-based outfitting and guiding; bird watching and wildlife viewing tours; organised hiking and backpacking tours, and; photography workshops.
- b) Horses and equipment must be managed to minimize site deterioration and prevent the introduction of weeds.
- c) Commercial recreation operators will be identified as a specific user group in an Education Plan that will be developed for the protected areas.
2. a) Maintaining the ecological integrity and 'western heritage' character of the protected areas will take precedence over the expansion of commercial recreational activities within the protected areas.
- b) Appropriate regulations and an approvals process will be developed by provincial agencies to address commercial recreational activities in the protected areas.
- c) Monitoring will be undertaken as necessary to determine the type of activities that are occurring and to assess the impacts of commercial recreational activities. A methodology may be adopted or developed to assess levels of use, environmental impacts, and recreational carrying capacities within the Wildland.

2.7 Non-motorized Recreational Activities

Synopsis

A wide range of different activities fall into the category of non-motorized recreational activities. A partial list of activities might include: hiking, backpacking, wildlife viewing, cross country skiing, snow shoeing, horseback riding, mountain biking, and various water related activities. The aesthetic qualities and natural features found in the protected areas will likely draw recreational visitors to the area in the coming years. Low impact, dispersed recreational activities which are compatible with direction provided in this management plan should have minimal effects on the natural environment. Consistent with the overall intent of this

management plan, i.e., to protect the Wildland's and Heritage Rangeland's resource values, a deliberate decision has been made to not market the protected areas as a recreation or tourism destination area.

A recreational infrastructure (consisting of public services, amenities, concessions, trail-heads, established back country campsites, etc.) does not exist within the protected areas for use by recreationists. Existing access to the Wildland on its southern border (commencing from the municipal road) is through primitive, un-maintained trails. The implementation of provisions in this plan will lead to the future establishment of an access point, road pull-offs and two staging areas. Visitors engaged in vehicle assisted camping are encouraged to take advantage of established campgrounds at provincial recreation areas and provincial parks in the surrounding area. In accordance with this plan, signs will be erected to inform recreational users of key messages. Failure to obey legally posted signs constitutes an offence. Potential exists for conflicts between recreationists and other users, and between recreationists and livestock. Recreational activities will be monitored to assess any impacts that may emerge; corrective actions will be taken where necessary.

Management Objectives

1. To allow non-motorized recreational activities and heritage appreciation activities within the protected areas.
2. To manage non-motorized recreational activities within the protected areas to minimize environmental/ecological impacts and to avoid conflicts between user groups.

Management Strategies

1. a) Given the limited number – and primitive nature – of access facilities, the lack of on-site services, and the unique and sensitive nature of the environment, the protected areas will not be actively promoted or marketed as a destination area for recreational users.
- b) Recreational users will need to obtain permission from the grazing disposition holder to enter the Heritage Rangeland (except when using 'access trails' that are identified in this plan).
- c) Trails for recreational users will not be formally established. Hikers are encouraged to use existing foot paths, livestock and game trails, motorized access trails, and designated OHV trails. Existing trails will not be maintained.
- d) Non-motorized recreational users will be addressed as a specific user group in the Education Plan.
- e) All special, non-commercial recreational or adventure events in the protected areas will require a permit. Permits may be issued through an approval process (as stipulated in provincial legislation).
- f) Backcountry camping will not be permitted within the Heritage Rangeland but is allowed in the Wildland.
- g) No open fires are allowed in the Heritage Rangeland.
2. a) An Education Plan will identify appropriate procedures, guidelines, and regulations to ensure that low-impact recreational practices are observed.

- b) Monitoring will be undertaken as necessary to determine the types of activities that are occurring and to assess the impacts of non-motorized recreational activities. A methodology may be adopted or developed to assess levels of use, environmental impacts, and recreational carrying capacities within the Wildland.

2.8 Public Access and Motorized Recreational Activities

Synopsis

Motorized recreation has occurred in the Bob Creek Wildland and Black Creek Heritage Rangeland for many decades. Public access to, and entry into, the two protected areas has historically taken place from a number of points on the western, northern, eastern, and southern boundaries. Access to and through the protected areas has been influenced by several key factors: topography, ground conditions, method of transport, and restrictions imposed by landowners and disposition holders who have controlled access into the protected areas.

Motorized recreational activity in the area has historically been confined to hunter access during the hunting season. More recently, the area has been sought out by off highway vehicle (OHV) enthusiasts. The use of newer, more powerful OHVs with improved performance capabilities has led to more extensive use of the landscape for motorized recreational purposes. However, comparatively speaking, the Wildland and Heritage Rangeland have been subjected to considerably lower levels of OHV use than forest reserve lands further to the west.

The origin of some access trails can be attributed to early mineral exploration; other trails have been subsequently established by locals and recreationists. Trail conditions vary widely. Erosion has become a problem at a number of sites. No significant restrictions were imposed by the provincial government to regulate motorized vehicles in the Wildland or Heritage Rangeland prior to the designation of the two sites in May 1999. However, environmental impacts caused by irresponsible users has resulted in the imposition of tighter access controls by adjacent landowners and leaseholders in recent years.

Upon designation of the Wildland in May 1999, a designated trail system was established in the western half of the Wildland; recreational motorized access was prohibited in the eastern half of the Wildland. These decisions were based on direction provided in the recommendations report of the Special Places Whaleback Local Committee.

Management Objectives

1. To provide reasonable, motorized public access to the protected areas.
2. To minimize the human footprint associated with access trails, designated trails, and motorized recreational activities.
3. To provide a primitive access point, staging areas, and road/trail pull-offs for public use.
4. To restrict motorized recreation to the western half of the Wildland.
5. To provide opportunities for motorized recreation and heritage appreciation through the establishment of a designated trail system within the western half of the Wildland.

6. To exclude motorized recreation in the eastern half of the Wildland and in the Heritage Rangeland.
7. To ensure that OHV impacts on wildlife, the landscape, and water-courses are minimized through the establishment and enforcement of appropriate conditions and restrictions.
8. To undertake management activities to safeguard the environment from motorized impacts and to ensure that access trails, designated trails, access points, staging areas, and pull-offs do not suffer from deterioration, consistent with their 'primitive' status.

Management Strategies

Access Trails (see Map 3)

Motorized public access to the Bob Creek Wildland will be permitted through use of the following two access trails:

- southern access – Camp Creek access trail. Both highway and off road vehicles are permitted on this access trail.
- southeastern access – Bob Creek access trail. Use of this access trail is restricted to off highway vehicles (OHVs – see definition in the Glossary) that are permitted on designated trails within the Wildland (i.e., highway vehicles and four-wheel drives are not permitted on this access trail).

Public land adjacent to the Wildland will need to be crossed to access the Bob Creek Wildland, i.e., vehicles and OHVs will need to pass through the Black Creek Heritage Rangeland to gain access to the Wildland. Bill 24 (i.e., the Wilderness Areas, Ecological Reserves and Natural Areas Amendment Act), however, prohibits recreational off-highway vehicle use in Heritage Rangelands. To address this problem, the provincial government will adopt new legislation in the future to allow recreational off highway vehicles to cross the Black Creek Heritage Rangeland to access designated trails in the Bob Creek Wildland. The grazing disposition holder has granted permission for the public to cross lease land (i.e., Black Creek Heritage Rangeland) if vehicles and OHVs remain on the two permitted access trails. Conditions that need to be observed when using these access trails are noted in the next paragraph.

Private land must be crossed when using the Camp Creek access trail. The landowner has granted permission for the public to cross deeded land to access the Camp Creek access trail, provided that the following conditions are observed (these conditions also apply to any vehicles and OHVs that pass through the Heritage Rangeland on established trails):

- vehicles and OHVs must remain on the main access trail (travel is not permitted on any side-trails that branch off the main trail)
- only quad, snowmobile, and horse trailers are allowed on the Camp Creek access trail (i.e., boat and camping trailers are not allowed on the Camp Creek access trail)
- all posted signs must be obeyed
- vehicles must not block the access trail
- users must comply with any temporary trail closure that has been put into effect by the landowner/leaseholder (the landowner/leaseholder will consult with appropriate provincial agencies before a trail closure is put into effect). The landowner/leaseholder has the authority to close access trails on deeded and lease land in response to situations

that threaten either the environment or public safety, e.g., fire hazard, site impairment/degradation, adverse weather, site vulnerability. Public notification may occur through signage and/or a closed gate.

The Camp Creek and Bob Creek access trails are unimproved trails. Maintenance of access trails that occur on public land may be undertaken from time to time. Trail maintenance will be undertaken at the discretion of provincial agencies in consultation with the affected disposition holder.

The section of the Camp Creek access trail that crosses private land may require improvements to sustain reasonable access. A Road Use Agreement is required to secure public access over private land on the Camp Creek access trail. The Road Use Agreement, which will be developed by the landowner and provincial government, may (among other things) address the five conditions that are outlined above.

Access Points

White Creek Access Point (see Map 4)

This access point is located adjacent to (i.e., is outside the) Wildland along White Creek on the Wildland's western border. The access point will be identified by signs. The purpose of this access point is to provide parking for vehicles that are not permitted within the Wildland. Motorized access into the Wildland is restricted to OHVs (see 'Designated Trails' for a description of OHVs that are permitted in the Wildland). Four-wheel drives and highway vehicles are not permitted beyond this access point into the Wildland.

Staging Areas

Camp Creek Staging Area (see Map 3)

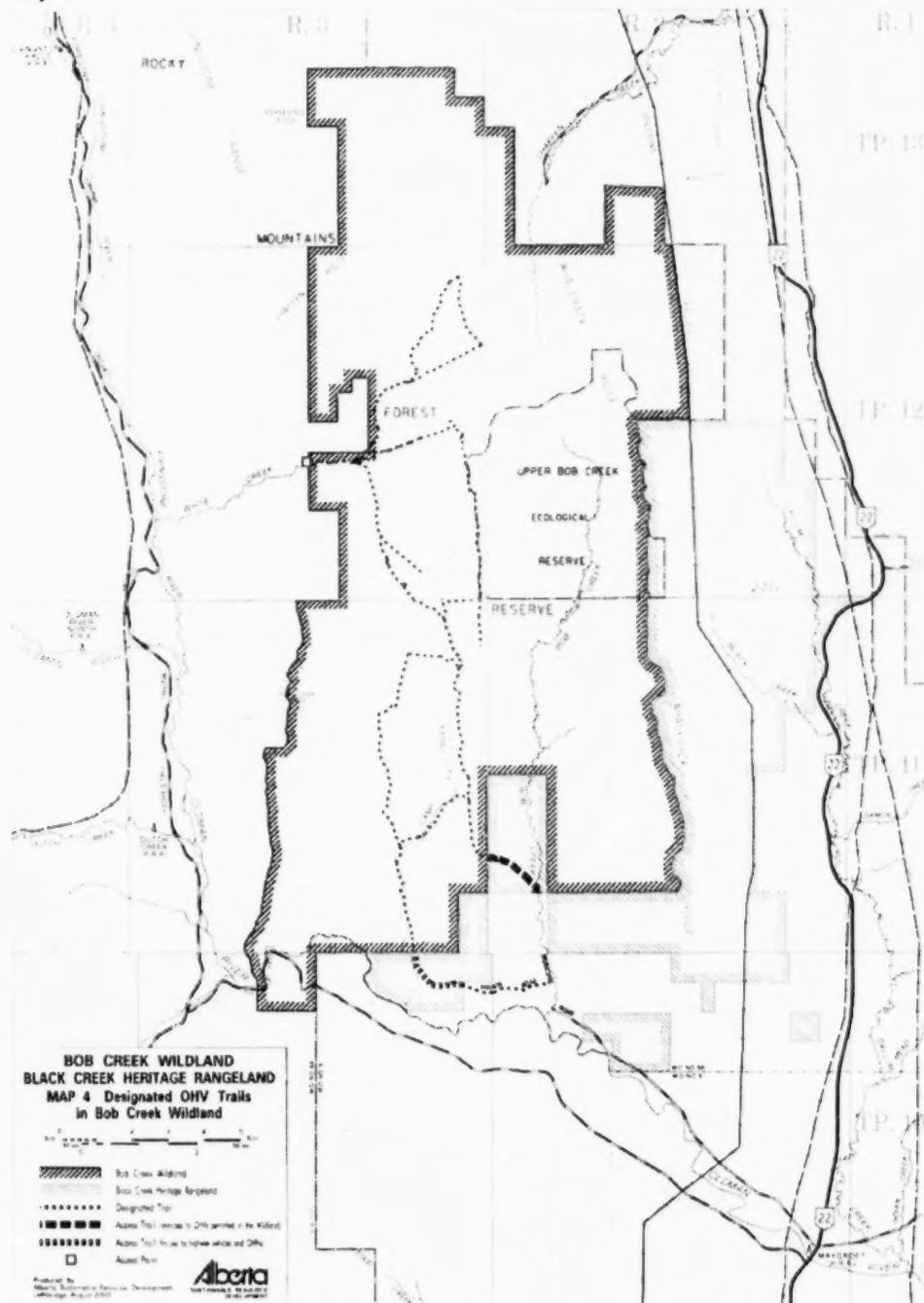
This staging area is located within the Wildland along its southern border, adjacent to Camp Creek. It is located at the end of the Camp Creek access trail. The staging area will be identified by signs and appropriate perimeter markers. Services and facilities will not be made available at this site. The purpose of this staging area is to provide parking for four-wheel drives, other vehicles, and horse and OHV trailers. Motorized access into the Wildland is restricted to OHVs (see 'Designated Trails' for a description of OHVs that are permitted in the Wildland). Backcountry camping is not permitted on-site or within 1 Km of the staging area. Interpretive displays and educational materials may be made available at the Camp Creek Staging Area.

The previously existing (i.e., traditional) random camping area along Camp Creek (within the Heritage Rangeland, 35, 10, 3, W of 5), is no longer available for motorized camping and will be reclaimed. The traditional random camping area to the north of the Camp Creek Staging Area (within the Wildland) is also off limits to motorized camping and will be reclaimed.

**BOB CREEK WILDLAND
BLACK CREEK HERITAGE RANGELAND
MAP 3
Public Access and Access Facilities**



Map 4



Bob Creek Staging Area (see Map 3)

A staging area will be located along Bob Creek at the end of the municipal road. The staging area will be identified by signs and appropriate perimeter markers. Services and facilities will not be made available at this site. The purpose of the staging area is to provide parking for four-wheel drives, highway vehicles, and horse and OHV trailers. Only OHVs that are permitted within the Wildland may continue along the Bob Creek access trail beyond the staging area. Camping is not permitted within the confines of this staging area.

The Bob Creek staging area is the preferred access point for the majority of visitors seeking access to the Heritage Rangeland and Wildland. Interpretive displays and educational materials may be made available at the Bob Creek staging area.

Serviced Motorized Camping and Visitor Facilities

Serviced campsites and visitor facilities will not be constructed or made available in the two protected areas to minimize the human footprint within the Wildland and Heritage Rangeland. Visitors and recreationists are encouraged to make use of established campsites found in the vicinity of the two protected areas, including the following:

- Maycroft Provincial Recreation Area
- Chain Lakes Provincial Park
- Forest Recreation Areas along the Forestry Trunk Road (i.e., Racehorse, Dutch Creek, Oldman River North, Livingstone Falls)

Pull-offs (see Map 3)

Three pull-offs will be established to allow visitors and recreational users to park their vehicles off roads and trails. Pull-offs are intended to provide river access for sport angling, viewing scenery, and other compatible day use activities; no overnight camping is permitted at these sites. Pull-offs will be established at the following locations for a limited number of vehicles:

- along the Local Road in the Livingstone Gap (two locations)
- along the Camp Creek access trail within the Heritage Rangeland

Pull-offs will be identified by signage and appropriate perimeter markers. Interpretive displays and educational materials could be made available at pull-offs.

Designated Trails (see Map 4)**Wildland**

Only specified off highway vehicles (OHVs) – snowmobiles and quads – are allowed on designated trails in the Wildland. For the purposes of this plan, a quad is defined as a four-wheeled vehicle (but also includes three-wheeled vehicles):

- ❑ having low ground pressure tires not exceeding 16 psi
- ❑ having a gross vehicle weight not exceeding 500 kilograms (as specified by the manufacturer)

All other motorized vehicles (e.g., four-wheel drive vehicles and motor bikes) are not permitted on designated trails in the Wildland.

Specified OHVs are permitted within the Wildland under the following conditions:

1. OHVs must be confined to (kept on) designated trails (see Map 4) at all times except when passing, turning or parking an OHV immediately adjacent to the designated trail. Departures or excursions from designated trails onto adjacent public land is not permitted. OHVs can, however, be used to access a camp site within 100 meters of a designated trail.
2. Organized OHV events/rallies will not be permitted in the Wildland.
3. Designated trails will be closed to OHVs from the end of the elk hunting season to April 30 to minimize stress on wildlife and to ensure that elk are not displaced from their winter range.
4. OHV operators must minimize impacts to water quality and riparian zones at creek crossings.

The following management actions will be undertaken with respect to designated trails in the Wildland:

1. trail assessments
2. trail maintenance, restoration, and development of creek crossings
3. erecting signs and trail identification markers
4. closing trail segments (due to: trail deterioration, fire hazard, public safety issues, high erosion potential, maintenance work, other resource management considerations)
5. assessing user compliance with OHV requirements and restrictions
6. enforcement

Heritage Rangeland

Public and recreational motorized access within and through a Heritage Rangeland is prohibited under provincial law, except on permitted 'access trails' as noted in this plan. For this reason, designated trails (comparable to the designated trail system that exists within the Wildland) have not been established within the Heritage Rangeland. Motorized access for the purpose of game retrieval is not permitted in the Heritage Rangeland.

Non-designated Trails

Existing discontinued (unused) OHV trails that are not part of the designated trail system in the Wildland will be inspected to determine if they should be reclaimed/restored. Likewise, discontinued OHV trails in the Heritage Rangeland that are in need of reclamation will also be

identified. Any reclamation work that is to be completed will be undertaken in accordance with a work plan that has been developed by provincial agencies in consultation with appropriate stakeholders. The reclamation plan will recognize the value of retaining some traditional use trails for resource management purposes, trapping, and other permitted uses.

Public Education

The public will be informed of the need to minimize and control motorized access within the Wildland and Heritage Rangeland to maintain the ecological integrity of the area. Information on access trails, access points, staging areas, un-serviced campsites, pull-offs, and designated trails may be made available to visitors and recreationists using the following means:

- brochure/map (to be made available on-site, at government offices, and the MD of Ranchland Administrative office)
- signs
- interpretive displays
- through contact with agency staff and disposition holders
- web sites

There will be no advertising or signs informing motorists of the Wildland or Heritage Rangeland along Highway 22.

2.9 Motorized Access for Resource Management Purposes

Synopsis

All visitor and recreational motorized access within the protected areas is confined to established access trails and designated trails (as specified in this plan). These defined trails are, however, insufficient to accommodate the needs of disposition holders and government agencies (including consultants and contractors) who are engaged in resource management activities within the Wildland and Heritage Rangeland, and who do not have access provisions granted under a provincial statute (e.g., Wildlife Act; Wilderness Areas, Ecological Reserves, and Natural Areas Act; Provincial Parks Act). Additional access privileges could be arranged for these legitimate user groups to enable them to carry out various resource management functions in both protected areas. Disposition holders and government staff are asked to observe good stewardship practices when operating vehicles and equipment throughout the protected areas.

Management Objective

1. To allow four-wheel drives, OHVs, and equipment to be used in the protected areas for resource management purposes.

Management Strategies

1. Motorized access by provincial government staff (including consultants and contractors) will be allowed for resource management purposes (e.g., back country patrols, compliance checks, range audits, range improvement projects, wildlife management, resource inventory work, maintenance and reclamation of trails, etc.) and for research purposes.
2. Motorized access will be granted to grazing disposition holders to manage domestic livestock and carry out range management and improvement projects.
3. Motorized access will be granted to registered trappers to carry out trap line management activities.
4. Motorized access to existing Rights-of-Way in the protected areas is available for the maintenance of power lines and Rights-of-Way.
5. Care and discretion must be exercised when operating motorized vehicles and equipment in the protected areas to minimize environmental impacts. Sensitive areas and trails that will be (or have been) reclaimed should be avoided. Authorized users should limit motorized travel to agreed-to trails and corridors as determined through consultations with disposition holders and provincial agencies. Consideration should be given to the use of horses, foot travel, and helicopters as alternate modes of transportation wherever practical and feasible.

2.10 Signs and Visitor Information

Synopsis

Signs are essential for conveying important information to visitors and users of the two protected areas and in protecting the natural environment from unacceptable human actions. Signs typically fall into one of the following categories: location and direction signs; information signs; designated OHV trail signs; interpretive/educational signs; instruction signs; warning/hazard signs; and boundary signs. Key messages conveyed through signs will identify behavioral requirements and expectations for users of the two protected areas. Given the number and diversity of signs that will be developed for the protected areas, a comprehensive sign strategy will be prepared to clarify the type, location, appearance, and content of signs. To be effective, signs need to convey the right message for the intended audience and be situated at the right location for maximum impact.

Management Objectives

1. To develop and provide effective signs for the benefit of users of the protected areas.
2. To ensure that all signs contribute to the achievement of management objectives and strategies that are contained in this plan.

Management Strategies

1. a) Provincial agencies will develop and implement a comprehensive sign strategy in consultation with the Bob/Black Creek Advisory Committee.
b) Sign attributes (i.e., colour, size, and appearance) will comply with provincial standards.

- c) Directional, informational, regulatory, and educational signs will be strategically placed to convey essential information to protected area users.
- 2. a) Signs will be developed, installed, and maintained by Parks and Protected Areas.
- b) Signs will not be used to give high exposure to the protected areas. Signs or advertising pertaining to the protected areas will not be placed along Highway 22.
- c) BP Amoco and the Nature Conservancy will be recognized for their contribution in the establishment of the Bob Creek Wildland.
- d) Key messages that will be incorporated in educational and interpretive signs will be identified in an Education Plan.

2.11 Public Education and Awareness

Synopsis

As a result of raised public awareness and media exposure which has surrounded the establishment of the Bob Creek Wildland and Heritage Rangeland, it is anticipated that the two protected areas will attract increased visitors. Traditional users and newcomers will, among other things, need to be educated about the status and location of the new protected areas and the conditions and restrictions that need to be observed by all visitors.

The natural and cultural history of the Wildland and Heritage Rangeland will be interpreted in a manner that instills appreciation for the area and enlists support for the protection of the protected areas. Interpretive programs that are adopted will need to be assessed to determine their effectiveness. Research will: confirm specific audience groups that visit or use the protected areas; identify each audiences' specific education needs; confirm resource management issues that are unique to each audience, and; verify which media are most effective in communicating information to target audiences. Key messages, target user groups, delivery mechanisms, and a de-marketing strategy will be identified in an Education Plan. This plan will be developed by Alberta Community Development in consultation with various stakeholders.

Management Objectives

1. To communicate key messages to user groups and potential visitors who are on-site or who are planning to visit the protected areas.
2. To develop education programs that are based on the natural heritage of the protected areas and the ranching culture of the region, and which will assist in preserving the landscape and resource values that are present in both protected areas.
3. To ensure that public education and awareness programs do not give high exposure to the protected areas.

Management Strategies

1. a) A baseline audience profile will be developed that identifies specific audience groups and their educational needs.

- b) An education plan will be developed by Parks and Protected Areas, in consultation with the Bob/Black Creek Advisory Committee, based on direction contained in this management plan. The education plan will include strategies for creating and disseminating information to potential visitors and user groups in response to the baseline audience profile. The education plan will also contain a de-marketing strategy for the protected areas (de-marketing encourages the use of other areas that can withstand additional visitation levels, e.g., inform visitors of local hiking opportunities at Beauvais Lake and Chain Lakes Provincial Parks). Off-site interpretive programs will occur at Beauvais Lake Provincial Park and Chain Lakes Provincial Park to provide heritage appreciation and education opportunities for visitors. Education and awareness strategies will be tailored to the specific users of the protected areas and will not encourage marketing or promotion of the protected areas to the public at large.
 - c) Education materials and programs will be evaluated on an ongoing basis. The success of education programs will be assessed to ensure that desirable outcomes are being achieved.
- 2. a) See strategies #1a, 1b, and 1c above.
- 3. a) Given the limited number – and primitive nature – of access facilities, the lack of on-site services, and the unique and sensitive nature of the environment, public education and awareness initiatives will not promote the protected areas with the aim of attracting increased levels of visitor use.
 - b) The protected areas will be referred to as the Bob Creek Wildland and Black Creek Heritage Rangeland in government communications. The two protected areas will not be referred to as the ‘Whaleback’ in public education materials.

2.12 Research Activities

Synopsis

Protected areas like the Wildland and Heritage Rangeland provide excellent opportunities for completing studies and research projects on: natural systems, specific life forms, human impacts to the environment, the effectiveness of new and current management practices, etc. Given the relatively pristine character of the Wildland, and the fact that it represents an outstanding example of the Montane Natural Sub-region within the province, this protected area may well be of particular interest to researchers. Research is considered to be a complimentary activity in both protected areas. The information and data obtained through research projects is valuable, not only in better managing both sites, but in furthering our understanding of ecosystems.

Management Objective

- 1. To allow research that advances scientific knowledge and contributes to the effective management of the protected areas.

Management Strategies

1. a) Research projects must comply with Parks and Protected Areas policies.
- b) Research projects that will directly benefit provincial agencies in the management of the protected areas will be given priority. Other research projects will be assessed on the merits of each proposal and other relevant factors.
- c) Wildlife, fisheries, vegetation, range and other ecological inventories and research projects that are carried out by government agencies (or government consultants/agents) must comply with government policies.
- d) Parks and Protected Areas will refer all research applications to appropriate provincial government agencies.
- e) Research projects should generally be compatible with protecting the resource values that are found in both protected areas.

2.13 Historical Resources

Synopsis

Although no paleaontological resources have been found within the protected areas, fossils have been collected from adjacent areas. Any fossil finds that may occur in the future should be reported to the Royal Tyrrell Museum (Alberta Community Development). Excavation permits are required before commencing with fossil recovery.

Largely as a result of oil/gas exploration activity, 19 archaeological and historical sites have been discovered in the protected areas. Of these known sites, 17 exist in the Wildland and two exist in the Heritage Rangeland. The historic sites include a building foundation, lime kiln, lookout, and corral and fence. 'Precontact' sites consist of a cairn, burial site, stone circles, and campsites. Given the high potential for finding and recovering additional archaeological and historic resources in the protected areas, Alberta Heritage Resource Management Branch (Alberta Community Development) should be notified before commencing with any ground disturbance.

3.0 Plan Administration and Implementation

3.1 Plan Implementation

Direction contained in this management plan represents the provincial government's policy for managing the Bob Creek Wildland and Black Creek Heritage Rangeland. Plan implementation will occur through the efforts of participating government agencies and non-government stakeholders.

A Work Plan will be developed by participating provincial agencies on an annual basis to ensure that an integrated and focused approach is being adopted in putting the plan's provisions into effect. The Work Plan may, among other things, address the following:

- assess accomplishments during the previous year
- identify implementation priorities for the coming year
- confirm existing (and emerging) issues and appropriate management interventions
- document monitoring activities that are underway and identify monitoring activities which will be adopted in the future

Input will be sought from the Bob/Black Advisory Committee during the development of the Work Plan.

3.2 Roles and Responsibilities of Provincial Agencies

A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between Alberta Community Development and Alberta Sustainable Resource Development has been developed. This agreement outlines the roles and responsibilities of both departments in managing the two protected areas. The MOU is found in the Appendix.

3.3 Bob/Black Creek Advisory Committee

A Bob/Black Creek Advisory Committee will be established to provide advice on the management of the two protected areas. The advisory committee will be comprised of seven individuals having the following affiliations:

- Municipal District of Ranchland (1 member)
- public at large (3 local members to be appointed by the MD of Ranchland, ensuring that a balance of interests is observed)
- Alberta Community Development, Parks and Protected Areas Division (1 member)
- Alberta Sustainable Resource Development (1 member representing Public Lands and Forests Division and 1 member representing Fish and Wildlife Division)

The chair of the advisory committee will be selected by the committee members. The advisory committee will adopt a Terms of Reference.

The roles and responsibilities of the advisory committee are generally as follows:

- remain informed of progress being made in implementing the management plan
- assess the ongoing relevance of provisions in the management plan in light of new information, monitoring programs, emerging issues, new technologies, new management practices, etc.
- ensure that the intent of the management plan is being fulfilled
- receive local input on the two protected areas
- make advisory recommendations in response to issues, trends, changing use levels, site specific problems, etc.
- identify management actions have been successful and those which are in need of further attention
- assess the overall effectiveness of the management plan

3.4 Plan Assessments and Amendments

This plan will be kept current. In accordance with the principle of adaptive management, direction contained in the management plan will be assessed on a continual basis. Where necessary, the plan will be modified to ensure that the overall management intent for the protected areas is being achieved. Plan amendments will be instituted when assessments reveal that provisions in the plan are not achieving desired results or outcomes.

The Bob/Black Creek Advisory Committee will initiate formal plan assessments at approximately 5-year intervals to determine whether a full-scale plan review is required.

Appendix 1

Permitted Activities: Bob Creek Wildland and Black Creek Heritage Rangeland

ACTIVITY	Bob Creek Wildland	Black Creek Heritage Rangeland ♦
Recreational Uses and Facilities		
1. foot access (hiking, backpacking, wildlife viewing)	yes	yes
2. recreational hunting	yes	yes
3. recreational fishing	yes	yes
4. horse riding	yes	yes
5. mountain biking	yes	yes
6. cross country skiing / snow shoeing	yes	yes
7. backcountry (primitive) camping	yes	no
8. off-highway vehicles - quads (see definition for 'Off-Highway Vehicle' in Glossary)	yes - on designated trails (Map 4) *	no**
9. off-highway vehicles - snowmobiles	yes - on designated trails (Map 4) *	no**
10. off-highway vehicles - 4x4 trucks	no	no**
11. auto access staging area	Camp Creek (Map 3)	Bob Creek (Map 3)
12. auto access, serviced campgrounds	no	no
13. auto-assisted random camping	no	no
14. guiding / outfitting / commercial recreation ventures	yes	yes
15. recreational (tourism) facilities and services	no	no
* seasonal restrictions apply: designated trails will be closed to OHVs from the end of the elk hunting season to April 30 th		
** motorized access is permitted through the Heritage Rangeland on two designated 'access trails' (see management plan for details – Map 3)		
Non-Recreational Uses and Facilities		
1. trapping	yes	yes
2. domestic livestock grazing	yes	yes
3. cultivation	no	no
4. commercial logging	no	no
5. new electric transmission lines	no	no
6. Crown resources: oil / gas exploration and development	no	no
7. Freehold mineral exploration and development	yes	yes
8. development of surface materials / minerals	no	no
9. coal mining	no	no
10. new pipelines	only for recovery of Freehold oil / gas	only for recovery of Freehold oil / gas
11. tele-communication towers	no	no
12. new roads	no	no
13. motorized access for resource management purposes (e.g., trapping, grazing)	yes	yes
14. research projects	yes	yes

♦ users are required to contact the grazing lease holder before entering lease land

Appendix 2

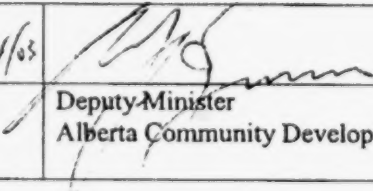
Memorandum of Understanding:

Management of Black Creek Heritage Rangeland and Bob Creek Wildland

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING:

Management of Black Creek Heritage Rangeland and Bob Creek Wildland

Approved By:

 August 14/03	 August 12/03	Aug 12/03
Deputy Minister Alberta Sustainable Resource Development	Deputy Minister Alberta Community Development	Date

Alberta
SUSTAINABLE RESOURCE
DEVELOPMENT

Alberta
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING:

Management of Black Creek Heritage Rangeland and Bob Creek Wildland

1.0 BACKGROUND

The Government of Alberta is committed to preserving in perpetuity landscapes, natural features and ecological processes representative of the environmental diversity of the province. Black Creek Heritage Rangeland and Bob Creek Wildland have been established as protected areas to preserve and protect these ecologically significant areas. The ongoing protection and management of these protected areas is achieved through the continuation of the historical grazing that has been integral to the management of these lands.

2.0 OBJECTIVE OF THIS MOU

This Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) provides a framework that clarifies and formalizes management roles, responsibilities and processes associated with the shared stewardship of Black Creek Heritage Rangeland and Bob Creek Wildland.

The MOU provides a basis for a positive and cooperative working arrangement between Alberta Sustainable Resource Development (SRD) and Alberta Community Development (CD). Statements within this MOU must be taken into context with the whole document and with the management plan and not read in isolation.

Memorandum of Understanding:
Management of Black Creek Heritage Rangeland and Bob Creek Wildland
July 31, 2003

SRD and CD agree to:

- 1. Share responsibility for stewardship of Black Creek Heritage Rangeland and Bob Creek Wildland; and**
- 2. Manage Black Creek Heritage Rangeland and Bob Creek Wildland consistent with the legislation, policies, management plan and program direction.**

3.0 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

3.1 PROGRAM AND POLICY DIRECTION

- CD is responsible for establishing Heritage Rangelands under the *Wilderness Areas, Ecological Reserves, Natural Areas and Heritage Rangelands Act* and Wildlands under the *Provincial Parks Act*.
- CD will continue to develop and coordinate program and policy direction and standards for Black Creek Heritage Rangeland and Bob Creek Wildland in cooperation with SRD.
- SRD will continue to develop and coordinate program and policy direction and standards for management of grazing and other dispositions under the *Public Lands Act* and the *Forest Reserves Act* for Black Creek Heritage Rangeland and Bob Creek Wildland and in cooperation with CD.
- SRD and CD share responsibility for ensuring that the two protected areas are managed in accordance with legislation, program, management plan and policy direction and standards applicable to Heritage Rangelands and Wildlands.
- In the absence of clear direction from the management plan or from this Memorandum of Understanding, SRD will be the primary contact and will refer the issue as appropriate.

3.2 DISPOSITION AND RANGE RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

- SRD is the primary contact and is responsible for the day-to-day operations, management and monitoring of dispositions and other approvals under the *Public Lands Act* on Black Creek Heritage Rangeland and implementation of the relevant legislation, policies and program direction. This includes issuing, administering, renewing and being responsible for all *Public Lands Act* dispositions, including grazing leases, located within Black Creek Heritage Rangeland.
- SRD is the primary contact and will manage and monitor grazing in Bob Creek Wildland under the *Forest Reserves Act*. This includes issuing, administering, renewing and being

Memorandum of Understanding:
Management of Black Creek Heritage Rangeland and Bob Creek Wildland
July 31, 2003

responsible for all *Forest Reserves Act* grazing permits on all forest reserve land located within Bob Creek Wildland and implementation of the relevant legislation, policies and program direction.

- SRD will work with grazing disposition holders to implement sound range management practices and to recognize and/or improve stewardship where required.
- SRD will assess ongoing range health and review overall management on grazing dispositions.

3.3 FISH AND WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT

- Resource allocations for fishing, hunting, trapping, and guiding/outfitting, where these activities are permitted, will be the responsibility of SRD in consultation with CD.
- Problem wildlife in the protected areas will be managed by SRD in consultation with CD.

3.4 FOREST PROTECTION

- SRD will be responsible for forest protection in consultation with CD.
- SRD will be responsible for initial attack and wildfire suppression.

3.5 FOREST HEALTH (INSECTS AND DISEASE)

- Forest health programs will be the responsibility of SRD in consultation with CD.

3.6 RECREATION MANAGEMENT

- Outdoor recreation management within the protected areas will be the responsibility of CD in consultation with SRD.

3.7 PLANNING

- CD is responsible for the development and maintenance of the Black Creek Heritage Rangeland and Bob Creek Wildland Management Plan, in cooperation with SRD.
- CD is responsible for coordinating public involvement related to the development, maintenance or updating of the Management Plan for Black Creek Heritage Rangeland and Bob Creek Wildland.
- SRD is responsible for development of range management plans and other operational plans for range resource management in accordance with the Black Creek Heritage Rangeland and Bob Creek Wildland Management Plan. Plans involving range improvements and/or

vegetation management will be referred to CD for input through the range management planning process.

- All other operational management plans will be developed using a consultative approach between SRD and CD.

3.8 CONFLICTS AND APPEALS

- SRD will facilitate resolution of disposition and approval holder conflicts for activities pursuant to the *Public Lands Act* and the *Forest Reserves Act*.
- SRD will coordinate appeals (e.g., compliance, conditions on dispositions, rejection of applications) by disposition holders and applicants under the *Public Lands Act* and the *Forest Reserves Act*.
- SRD will coordinate dispute resolution relating to recreational access to lands under grazing lease.

3.9 COMPLIANCE MONITORING AND ENFORCEMENT

- CD is responsible for compliance assurance and monitoring and for taking enforcement action where appropriate in Black Creek Heritage Rangeland and Bob Creek Wildland for infractions related to the *Wilderness Areas, Ecological Reserves, Natural Areas and Heritage Rangelands Act, Historical Resources Act, the Provincial Parks Act* and other Provincial Statutes as required.
- SRD is responsible for compliance assurance and monitoring and for taking action where appropriate for infractions pursuant to the *Public Lands Act, Forest Reserves Act, Wildlife Act, Fisheries (Alberta) Act, Fisheries Act (Canada), Migratory Birds Convention Act, Fresh Water Marketing Act, Wild Animal and Plant Protection and Regulation of International and Interprovincial Trade Act* and other Provincial Statutes as required.
- Where appropriate, SRD and CD will work together in managing, monitoring and ensuring compliance of their respective legislation within the Black Creek Heritage Rangeland and Bob Creek Wildland.

3.10 BUDGET RESPONSIBILITY

- SRD and CD will coordinate budgets to address specific management requirements on an as needed basis.
- SRD is responsible for budgeting relative to the day-to-day operational requirements and management and monitoring of dispositions and other approvals under relevant statutes such as the *Public Lands Act* and the *Forest Reserves Act* subject to the requirement to coordinate budgets to address specific management issues.

- CD is responsible for budgeting relative to the Parks and Protected Areas Program responsibilities (e.g., recreation, trails, staging areas, sanitary facilities, signs, brochures and maps).
- SRD is responsible for budgeting related to forest protection (fire) operations and all responsibilities under the *Forest and Prairie Protection Act*.

3.11 RESEARCH AND MONITORING

- SRD and CD will act in partnership to coordinate planning and implementation for research and monitoring.

4.0 MOU MANAGEMENT

4.1 PROGRAM MANAGEMENT AND COORDINATION COMMITTEE

- SRD and CD will establish and maintain a senior-level regional management committee to coordinate the management of Black Creek Heritage Rangeland and Bob Creek Wildland.

4.2 MOU INTERPRETATION AND APPLICATION

- SRD and CD staff with responsibilities under this MOU will work cooperatively and use their best efforts to resolve any matters relating to any differences of opinion regarding the interpretation or application of the MOU. If staff cannot resolve any difference of interpretation of this MOU or any other matter related to this MOU to their mutual satisfaction and agreement, then they shall submit the matter through their head office for decision. If the matter cannot be effectively resolved, then the Deputy Ministers of SRD and CD will, following review, make a final and binding decision.

4.3 REVIEW OF THIS MOU

- SRD and CD agree to manage Black Creek Heritage Rangeland and Bob Creek Wildland within the scope and understanding of this MOU and will ensure that this MOU remains up-to-date. Should any additions or changes be required to this MOU for any reason, the program management and coordination committee will make specific recommendations through their head office for decision.
- Grazing leaseholders and Forest Reserve grazing permit holders will be consulted before any changes are made to this MOU.

Memorandum of Understanding:
Management of Black Creek Heritage Rangeland and Bob Creek Wildland
July 31, 2003

Glossary

Access Trail

Is an un-maintained trail that has been established for the purpose of providing public access to the Bob Creek Wildland. The management plan specifies the types of vehicles, trailers, and OHVs that are permitted on access trails.

Animal Unit Equivalent

Accounts for variations that exist in the proportions of an animal unit due to age, weight, and type of livestock (e.g., a cow weighing approximately 1200 lbs. equals 1.15 Animal Unit Equivalents – based on metabolic weight).

Animal Unit Month (AUM)

Measure of forage required to maintain one animal unit (defined as a mature cow of 1000 lbs. [455 kg] with or without a calf) for one month.

Backcountry Camping

For the purposes of this management plan, backcountry camping refers to either mechanized camping (within 100 meters of designated trails) or un-mechanized camping occurring at sites that have not been established for camping purposes. Backcountry camping is 'primitive' camping, which will tend to be dispersed throughout the protected areas.

Biodiversity

"The variety, distribution, and abundance of different plants, animals, and micro-organisms, the ecological functions and processes they perform, and the genetic diversity they contain at local, regional or landscape levels of analysis." (Source: Dictionary of Natural Resource Management)

Coarse-Filter Management

"Conservation of land areas and representative habitats with the assumption that the needs of all associated species, communities, environments and ecological processes will be met." (Source: Dictionary of Natural Resource Management)

Designated Trail

Is an un-maintained, primitive trail that has been established for OHV use in the western half of the Bob Creek Wildland. All trails which are part of the designated trail system have been identified through signs and trail markers. OHVs that are permitted on designated trails are specified in the plan.

Domestic Livestock

For the purposes of this plan, domestic livestock refers to cattle, horses or sheep as defined in the Public Lands Act.

Exotic Species

Are non-native, non-indigenous plant and animal species. While some exotic species are deliberately introduced, other exotic species surface in an area by various accidental or unintentional means. Exotic species can have undesirable effects on native species and affect the integrity of ecosystems.

Fine-Filter Management

"Specific management for a single or a few species rather than broad management for a habitat or ecosystem." (Source: Dictionary of Natural Resource Management)

Keystone Species

"Species that are dominant in function and possibly (but not necessarily) in structure within any one ecosystem. They hold a crucial role in supporting the integrity of the entire ecosystem, and therefore affect the survival and abundance of many other species in the same ecosystem." (Source: Dictionary of Natural Resource Management)

Off Highway Vehicle (OHV)

For the purposes of this plan an OHV is either a snowmobile or a quad. A quad is defined as a four-wheeled vehicle (but also includes three-wheeled vehicles):

- ☐ having low ground pressure tires not exceeding 16 psi
- ☐ having a gross vehicle weight not exceeding 500 kilograms (as specified by the manufacturer)

Open Fire

Any fire that is dependent on combustible materials other than liquid fuels or propane.

Random Camping

Overnight camping which is dependent on – or is directly assisted by – a highway vehicle and which occurs in areas that have not been designated as campgrounds or campsites.

Silviculture

"The art, science, and practice of controlling the establishment, composition, health, quality, and growth of the vegetation of forest stands." (Source: Dictionary of Natural Resource Management)

References

- Alberta Energy Resources Conservation Board. 1994. ERCB Decision Report 94-8: Application for an Exploratory Well, Amoco Canada Petroleum Company Limited, Whaleback Ridge Area. ERCB, Calgary.
- Alberta Environmental Protection. 1997. Upper Bob Creek Ecological Reserve Management Plan. Lands and Forest Service, Edmonton.
- Alberta Forest Conservation Strategy Steering Committee. 1997. Alberta Forest Conservation Strategy. Alberta Environmental Protection, Edmonton.
- Alberta Forestry, Lands and Wildlife. 1987. Livingstone-Porcupine Hills Sub-Regional Integrated Resource Plan. Resource Evaluation and Planning Branch, Edmonton.
- Dunster, Julian and Katherine. 1996. Dictionary of Natural Resource Management. UBC Press, Vancouver.
- Geowest Environmental Consultants Ltd. 1997. Bio-physical Inventory, Significant, Sensitive and Disturbance Features of the Whaleback Area. Resource Data Division, Alberta Environment, Edmonton.
- MD of Ranchland. 1996. MD of Ranchland Land Use Bylaw No. 12/95. Oldman River Inter-Municipal Service Agency, Lethbridge.
- Olson and Olson. 2000. The Southern Rockies Landscape Planning Pilot Study: Summary Report. Alberta Environment, Edmonton.
- Olson and Olson. 2000. The Southern Rockies Landscape Planning Pilot Study: Visual Resource Modelling, Disturbance and Pattern Analysis. Alberta Environment, Edmonton.
- Whaleback Special Places Local Committee. 1998. Recommendations to the Minister of Environmental Protection. MD of Ranchland No. 66, Nanton.